Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6TH MEETING

Held at United Nations Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 10 January 1991, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. ALATAS	(Indonesia)
later:	Mr. MACKAY (Vice-President)	(New Zealand)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Ms. HOINKES (United States of America) said that her country did not support the proposed amendment to the Treaty for both substantive and procedural reasons. While a comprehensive test ban remained a long-term objective of the United States, such a ban must be viewed in the context of a time when nuclear deterrence would no longer be needed to ensure international security and when verifiable arms reductions, improved verification capabilities and a greater balance in conventional forces had been achieved.

2. Her country's opposition to the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban went to the very heart of its national security and that of its allies. The United States relied upon a credible nuclear deterrent and nuclear testing was essential to maintain that deterrent. As the member States of NATO had recently reaffirmed, nuclear weapons would continue to fulfil an essential role in the overall strategy of the Alliance to prevent war by ensuring that there were no circumstances in which nuclear retaliation in response to military action might be discounted. As long as nuclear weapons continued to play a critical role in its national security, the United States must have a sensible testing programme to ensure the credibility and safety of its forces. Testing had made it possible to correct weaknesses in weapon safety and effectiveness, lessen the risk of accidental detonation and substantially reduce the total number of weapons in the stockpile since the 1960s. A halt to testing would not prevent the production of nuclear weapons and would not eliminate a single existing nuclear weapon. It could however create uncertainty concerning the safety and credibility of the stockpile and make it impossible to introduce safety improvements or react to new threats. A comprehensive test ban, therefore, could erode stability, not enhance it.

3. The partial test-ban Treaty had served the parties well. It would be unwise to create a new and wholly different treaty because that might seriously jeopardize the continued viability of the existing Treaty régime. The United States believed that it was a very serious mistake to propose that the partial test-ban Treaty should be eliminated and replaced by a comprehensive test ban that would not include all nuclear-weapon States. When the amendment proposal had been made, her country had informed the other parties that, in accordance with its rights as an original party, it would not allow the proposed amendment to be adopted. It had urged other parties to oppose the proposal to convene an Amendment Conference as a questionable and costly means of addressing the question of a comprehensive test ban. Accordingly, the United States would not participate in, or provide financial support to, any continuation of the current Conference beyond the scheduled two-week session and urged other parties to join in bringing that process to a close.

4. Over the past decade, the United States had demonstrated its commitment to arms control and was proud of its record both in bilateral talks with the Soviet Union and in multilateral forums. Her country had concluded a number of arms

(Ms. Hoinkes, United States)

control agreements in 1990 and, even more recently, its initiatives in the strategic arms reduction talks had accelerated progress towards an agreement in the near future.

5. The United States believed that the subject of further limitations on nuclear explosions warranted very careful attention and was prepared to participate in work on issues related to a comprehensive test ban in the Conference on Disarmament. Her Government, with the Soviet Union, had a step-by-step approach to further limits on nuclear testing. Nevertheless, the United States had not identified any further limitations on nuclear weapons tests, in addition to those set forth in the threshold test-ban Treaty, that would be in its national security interest. Barring unforeseen circumstances, however, the United States remained ready to support the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban in the Conference on Disarmament on the same non-negotiating basis on which the Committee had been established in 1990. Bilaterally, her country would be ready to propose to the Soviet Union negotiations on possible further steps in the area of nuclear testing.

6. The United States shared the deep concern of other countries about the need to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. The primary means of doing so was to support and strengthen the non-proliferation Treaty régime. That Treaty had played an important role in advancing international security and stability and should be extended indefinitely in 1995. Further legal restraints on nuclear testing were unlikely to affect the motivation of States seeking to acquire nuclear weapons or inhibit their ability to do so. Such States were likely to be driven more by their own perception of regional threats and rivalries than by the United States testing programme or the absence of a comprehensive test ban.

7. Her Government hoped that those who had indicated their support for the proposed amendment would reconsider the matter. It was important to ask whether the discussion of a comprehensive test ban at the Amendment Conference was in the best interest of the partial test-ban Treaty and the parties to it. The United States believed that it was not. The consideration of testing limitations must be undertaken in a serious manner and should not become the subject of political gamesmanship or create dissension among parties to a smoothly functioning treaty régime. The time had come to separate consideration of the issues related to a comprehensive test ban from the partial test-ban Treaty once and for all. Her country would continue to seek further arms reductions as part of a responsible, overall effort to achieve peace, stability and international security.

8. Mr. KATSIGAZI (Uganda) said that the Amendment Conference was an important step towards achieving a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. Far-reaching changes were occurring in the international political arena. Throughout the world, people desired freedom and did not want to be held hostage to the constant fear of annihilation by weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons must be banished.

9. The single driving force of the nuclear-arms race was nuclear-weapon testing. Since the conclusion of the 1963 partial test-ban Treaty and the 1968

(Mr. Katsigazi, Uganda)

non-proliferation Treaty, there had been an incredible increase in the number of nuclear weapons. Those weapons had also become more powerful and more accurate, making a nuclear war more likely and more difficult to prevent. The world was well aware of the devastating effects of nuclear testing on human health and the environment. Unfortunately, warnings about those dangers, which threatened the very existence of the human race, were not heeded.

10. With the changed circumstances in international relations, the old military doctrines must be discarded. Appropriate security structures must be set up to replace the adversarial strategies of the past. The position of NATO that nuclear weapons were indispensable for security against conventional attack simply encouraged more and more States to seek to acquire them. It was time for the United Kingdom and the United States to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty with the other nuclear Powers, without further delay. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to the non-governmental organizations concerned and Parliamentarians for Global Action for making the question of a comprehensive test-ban treaty a matter of global concern. Efforts must continue until such a treaty was concluded.

11. Mr. BERENGER (Mauritius) said that, although there had been a significant improvement in the overall international political climate, the quantitative and qualitative growth of nuclear weapons was continuing. Furthermore, the Persian Gulf crisis had made the danger of the use of nuclear weapons in regional conflicts even more acute. Mauritius believed that the ultimate goal must be the total elimination of nuclear weapons and disagreed with those who maintained that a balance of nuclear terror was forever inevitable. A comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty was long overdue, and the conclusion of such a treaty was the "litmus test" of the real willingness of the nuclear-weapon States and others to pursue nuclear disarmament.

12. Continued nuclear-weapon testing was not necessary to maintain the reliability and safety of existing stockpiles, and appropriate verification of a complete test ban was not impossible. Experts had demonstrated that the reliability of existing weapons could be ensured by a careful programme of non-nuclear testing and replacement. Although compliance with a complete test ban could not be verified with total certainty, a monitoring threshold for detecting militarily significant tests was technically possible. Nuclear testing served no other purpose but to develop new and more effective nuclear weapons. Nuclear tests demonstrated the discriminatory nature of the current non-proliferation régime, which permitted some States to improve their nuclear arsenals while others must forgo nuclear weapons. Mauritius favoured extending the non-proliferation Treaty beyond 1995 and hoped that all nuclear-weapon States would sign the Treaty and that it would become universal as soon as possible. To that end, an informal dialogue should be initiated to examine proposals for improving the non-proliferation Treaty and considering the possibility of convening an amendment conference by 1995 for that purpose.

13. Regional treaties prohibiting the acquisition, manufacture, deployment and testing of nuclear weapons had a vital role to play. In that context, Mauritius

(Mr. Berenger, Mauritius)

was actively promoting the concept of a south-west Indian Ocean and southern Africa nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty along the lines of the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

14. It had never been the intention of the sponsors of the Amendment Conference that only one session should be held; in fact, the General Assembly, in its resolution 45/50, had recommended the setting up of a working group. The mandate of any such working group need not overlap with that of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, which should continue its work, with the participation of the five nuclear-weapon States parties. The working group should deal with ensuring compliance with an eventual comprehensive test-ban treaty and the question of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. Should the Amendment Conference fail to establish the proposed working group, the second best option would be for the Conference to meet again in 1992 to review developments.

15. His delegation had taken note of the statement by the United States that, further to its ratification of the new verification Protocols to the threshold test-ban Treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty, it was willing to propose negotiations on further nuclear testing limitations consistent with its national security and with stability.

16. Whatever approach was adopted, the fact remained that a comprehensive test-ban treaty was long overdue. His delegation hoped that the work of the Amendment Conference and of the Ad Hoc Committee, together with bilateral discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and possible discussions involving the other nuclear-weapon States, would enable progress to be made.

17. Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia) said that the establishment of a pan-European security system, as now seemed possible, was one of the prerequisites for a new concept of global security. His Government sought radical reductions in the level of conventional weapons in Europe and the adoption of further confidence-building measures. In that connection, Czechoslovakia advocated the prohibition of chemical weapons as well as a comprehensive nuclear test ban and the limitation and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

18. The partial test-ban Treaty had become an important international instrument. It had prevented the emergence of new nuclear-weapon States, reduced the danger of an environmental disaster, and paved the way for the non-proliferation Treaty and bilateral and multilateral disarmament instruments. Yet it had not ended the nuclear-arms race, had not become universal, and had not led to a comprehensive test ban.

19. It was obvious that those goals would not be easy to attain. Progress had been hampered by an all-or-nothing approach, and his delegation thought it preferable to seek a test ban on a step-by-step basis. The bilateral dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union could be broadened in due course to include other nuclear-weapon States, while multilateral deliberations should be conducted at the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

20. Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union had led to the acceptance by those two countries of verification systems, in the context of the threshold test-ban Treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty, which could form an acceptable basis for more radical limitations of testing in the future. The next step should be for the two Powers to agree to limit the calibre of nuclear charges and to reduce the number of explosions per year. Negotiations to that end should be conducted without delay.

21. At the multilateral level, the Conference on Disarmament was best suited for the drafting of an instrument on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. The re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban was a welcome development; all nuclear-weapon States should join in its work.

22. Czechoslovakia was an active participant in the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts which was engaged in devising a verification system. Nevertheless, a comprehensive test ban would require a wider range of verification methods. A special expert group should be set up within the Conference on Disarmament to consider verification measures. The Amendment Conference should not seek to create any kind of alternative forum, but should provide renewed impetus to work within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

23. Mr. HOLGER (Chile) said that the conduct of nuclear tests affected the survival of mankind as a whole. Their complete prohibition could not be obstructed by a small group of States. The failure to ban all nuclear tests had simply allowed the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

24. Chile, together with the other countries members of the Permanent South Pacific Commission, categorically rejected the conduct of nuclear tests in the Pacific Basin.

25. It would be unrealistic to think that it was possible to amend the partial test-ban Treaty in the two weeks available to the Amendment Conference, but the process could not continue indefinitely. Accordingly, constructive negotiations should be conducted within the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, while consideration should be given to reconvening the Amendment Conference in 1992 or 1993, and to the establishment of a working group or the granting of a specific mandate to the President of the Conference so as to ensure the continuation of its work.

26. Mr. MacKay (New Zealand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

27. Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia) said that his delegation hoped that the Amendment Conference would serve to galvanize the international community into attaining the objective of a comprehensive test ban. Despite a more positive pattern of inter-State relations and the important progress made in the field of disarmament, States still retained the vast bulk of their arsenals, both nuclear and conventional. The security value of reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons was more than offset by the continuing technological development of such weapons and by the threat of their proliferation.

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

28. While the conclusion of the 1974 threshold test-ban and 1976 peaceful nuclear explosions Treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union had usefully established a yield threshold for nuclear-weapon tests, those instruments did not preclude the modernization of nuclear weapons. The depositaries of the partial test-ban Treaty had thus far failed to honour their obligation to continue negotiations to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions, and two of those Powers had stated their intention to continue nuclear testing, even though a great number of experts took the view that maintaining the reliability and safety of nuclear weapons no longer required such testing. There was a growing sentiment that failure to reach agreement on a comprehensive test-ban Treaty would undermine the non-proliferation Treaty and the status of the review conference. It should also be noted that the two nuclear-weapon States which were not parties to the partial test-ban Treaty had, in practice, been observing its provisions for some time, and his delegation trusted that they would find it possible to accede to the Treaty.

29. Opposition to the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty on the ground of verification was no longer tenable, since an effective solution to the verification issue was now within reach. It was not possible for the Amendment Conference to settle the issues which remained unresolved, in view of which an appropriate body should be established to continue the Conference's work.

30. His delegation commended the adoption by the United States House of Representatives of a resolution urging the United States Government to negotiate a comprehensive test-ban treaty, and the suggestion by Greenpeace that a world parliamentary referendum should be conducted, since such a referendum would serve to mobilize world public opinion against the continuation of testing. He trusted that all participants in the Amendment Conference would work to strengthen the non-proliferation régime and contribute to the complete prohibition of nuclear testing.

31. Mr. BURAVKIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the goal of a universal, comprehensive nuclear-test ban challenged States to reassess their choice of either a narrowly national or a global approach to security questions. The States parties to the partial test-ban Treaty of 1963 had complied strictly with its provisions for almost three decades, but the Treaty would be further strengthened by universal adherence to it, particularly by all nuclear-weapon States.

32. The failure to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty was a notable shortcoming of the international disarmament movement, since a comprehensive ban would halt the qualitative development of nuclear weapons and eliminate the most important stimulus to nuclear confrontation. The prohibition of nuclear tests would also strengthen the non-proliferation régime. The benefits of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban for the environment, for international security and for international relations could scarcely be exaggerated.

(Mr. Buravkin, Byelorussian SSR)

33. The new climate in international relations and the implementation of disarmament agreements, particularly the agreement to reduce conventional weapons in Europe, had fundamentally changed many circumstances which had previously hampered an agreement on a comprehensive test ban. The urgent need for such a ban called for all possible efforts to achieve it, including bilateral talks, joint efforts by all nuclear Powers and broader multilateral efforts in various forums. He welcomed the beginning of substantive work on the issue at the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the bilateral treaties concluded in 1974 and 1976 between the Soviet Union and the United States. He hoped that additional bilateral negotiations between the two Powers would further limit yields and the number of nuclear tests. The regularly-confirmed readiness of the Soviet Union to renew, on a reciprocal basis with the United States, a moratorium on nuclear tests at any time strengthened the prospects for a comprehensive test ban.

34. The amendment of the 1963 partial test-ban Treaty was a promising means of achieving that goal, and his delegation favoured that approach, together with the continuation of efforts through other channels. However, international efforts aimed at a comprehensive ban would be enhanced through their concentration in a single channel. The important ideas and documents presented at the Conference should not be put aside after its conclusion, but should serve as an important basis and impetus for substantive work by the appropriate multilateral organ, namely the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban of the Conference on Disarmament.

35. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that his country supported a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty because of its concern about the nearly 1,300 nuclear tests which had been conducted since the conclusion of the partial test-ban Treaty, as well as its conviction that the complete elimination of nuclear stockpiles was a requirement for lasting peace. Each of the arguments presented by those delegations in favour of nuclear testing (the need to monitor the reliability of existing nuclear weapons; the economic advantage of producing weapons that prompted proportionally greater expenditure by adversaries; the need to develop greater numbers of nuclear weapons to enhance security; the need to adapt military equipment to the effects of nuclear weapons) could be countered by a more compelling argument, i.e. the need to discourage the use of nuclear weapons; the economic advantage of using resources for development; the superfluousness of large numbers of weapons in excess of need; and the destabilizing effects of signalling aggressive preparedness by adapting military equipment.

36. The main purpose of a nuclear test ban was to impede the development of an inherently destabilizing technology. Among nuclear-weapon States, continued vertical proliferation outweighed the benefits of reductions in the number of nuclear weapons. Among non-nuclear-weapon States, a ban on nuclear tests would discourage the acquisition of nuclear capability, thereby limiting horizontal proliferation. Moreover, only a fraction of the intellectual and material resources currently expended on the refinement of weapons would be sufficient for the implementation of an effective verification system. A comprehensive test ban would undoubtedly strengthen the non-proliferation Treaty, and that objective

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

should not be hindered by discrimination on the part of nuclear-weapon States against non-nuclear-weapon States.

37. International security could not result from the further development of nuclear weapons, but only from disarmament and a spirit of détente, justice, maintenance of international law and order, the triumph of democratic values, a system of global ethics and economic development. The need for confrontational policies on the part of the Soviet Union and the United States had been greatly reduced by the current climate of international understanding, while the danger of the acquisition of nuclear capability by non-nuclear-weapon States should not be underestimated. The time had come for a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, and the international community could not afford to waste the opportunity offered by the Amendment Conference to achieve that goal.

38. Miss MANTILLA (Ecuador) said that those countries which claimed that it was inappropriate for non-nuclear-weapon States to call for the renunciation of a technology which they lacked and which was in their security interests because they were not self-reliant were the very same countries which refused to recognize that the testing of nuclear weapons was not indispensable to the initial development of nuclear activity and that such testing constituted an ever-increasing threat to world peace by necessitating the escalation of destructive capabilities. In the post-cold war period, there was no longer any justification for continued nuclear testing. Although advances in nuclear technology and the relatively easy access to such technology by moderately developed countries might prompt nuclear-weapon States to pursue the qualitative development of their arsenals, consideration should be given to the example of those countries which had freely chosen not to develop nuclear capability but to use their resources for activities to benefit humanity. Such a decision deserved a positive response from the nuclear-weapon States, in the spirit of true international co-operation, in order to realize the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and a comprehensive ban on the testing of nuclear weapons.

39. Her delegation was convinced that the efforts being made at the Amendment Conference were fully consistent with the current needs of the international community. In 1963, political considerations and the limited development of nuclear technology had appeared to justify the continuation of certain nuclear tests under a partial test-ban Treaty, but those factors had been definitively superseded by new global realities, by advances in technology and by practical considerations.

40. The connection between a comprehensive test ban and security necessitated the establishment of adequate reciprocal guarantees of compliance. To that end, three factors were necessary: the guarantee that the new commitments would not be used to gain unfair advantages in order to maintain a balance of terror; assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States that their commitment not to develop such weapons in the future would be duly compensated; and an example of good conduct in international relations which, duly provided by the international community, could have better deterrent effects than a nuclear-arms race. In addition, a uniform, general,

(Miss Mantilla, Ecuador)

universally-accepted verification system would be a necessary confidence-building measure for the implementation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

41. Environmental protection concerns, which had appeared exaggerated in 1963, could no longer be ignored, especially since the environmental degradation of the previous three decades had made the planet more fragile than ever. It was unrealistic to believe that nuclear testing in any given environment would not have tremendous repercussions on other environments. The countries of the South Pacific were justified in protesting that continued nuclear testing was damaging the marine environment and its resources. The automatic procedure established by the Permanent South Pacific Commission for protesting against situations relating to nuclear testing should be made universal as a means of channelling international pressure for a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

42. The establishment of co-ordination and monitoring mechanisms was a desirable means of consolidating the efforts of the international community. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. However, the Committee's mandate should be defined more precisely so that its work could effectively support initiatives aimed at the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

43. Ms. MASON (Canada) said that her delegation's annual sponsorship of a General Assembly resolution entitled "Urgent need for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty" reflected the importance which her Government attached to that issue. A ban on nuclear testing would discourage the development of new weapons that might have a destabilizing effect on international security. During the cold war, unbridled military competition among nuclear-weapon States had engendered suspicion and had detracted from efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. Fortunately, however, the United States and the Soviet Union had embarked on a course of intensive bilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, which had acquired considerable momentum. Those historic achievements were welcome, but they did not obviate the need for a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

44. In addition to impeding the nuclear-arms race, such a treaty would help to discourage the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. In a world where a number of non-nuclear-weapon States had yet to forgo the nuclear-weapon option by signing a binding international instrument, a comprehensive test-ban treaty would be of inestimable value.

45. Concern about the environmental effects of nuclear testing had played a decisive role in the negotiation of the partial test-ban Treaty. The contamination that was still being caused by underground nuclear testing, particularly in fragile environments, was a hazard that could not be dismissed. The conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty was the only way to eliminate categorically that significant environmental threat.

(Ms. Mason, Canada)

46. Her country, like many others, regretted that progress towards the goal of a comprehensive test-ban treaty had been very slow for a number of years, reflecting dissimilar approaches with regard to the type of efforts needed and the appropriate timing for the implementation of such a treaty. Nevertheless, recent developments offered hope that significant progress on reducing and ultimately banning nuclear tests was within reach.

47. Her country had long advocated a step-by-step approach as the most realistic means of achieving that goal. Such a process fostered mutual confidence among the parties and offered concrete experience with regard to key issues, such as compliance and verification, that were crucial to the implementation of an effective comprehensive test ban.

48. The mechanism for such a process had been in place since 1987, when the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to initiate full-scale negotiations on nuclear testing. Those negotiations had led, as a first step, to the conclusion of verification protocols to the 1974 threshold test-ban Treaty and the 1976 peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty. The ratification of those treaties provided a solid basis for negotiations on further testing restrictions. Her Government urged the two States concerned to negotiate limits on the number and yield of tests as intermediary steps towards the early conclusion of an effective and verifiable comprehensive test-ban treaty.

49. Efforts to advance towards that goal should also be made in the relevant multilateral forums. She noted with satisfaction that the Conference on Disarmament had finally succeeded, at its 1990 session, in establishing an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban. She looked forward to the re-establishment of that body at the beginning of the Conference's 1991 session with a view to its continuing the work undertaken in the previous year.

50. The Conference on Disarmament had also undertaken important work over several years in the area of verification, particularly seismic verification. The Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts, in which her country had participated, had made commendable efforts to devise a conceptual design for an international seismic data exchange system. The Ad Hoc Group's work would play a central role in the verification régime of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

51. The Amendment Conference could provide a useful forum for a focused discussion of the nuclear testing issue among the parties to the partial test-ban Treaty. The general debate was useful in clarifying the positions of all the delegations in attendance. It was to be hoped, however, that the Amendment Conference could proceed beyond a general exchange of views and give detailed consideration to some of the concrete problems associated with a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

52. The issue of verification was one area in which useful work could be done, and her delegation looked forward to sharing its experience and expertise in that field. In that connection, Canada took note of draft Protocol II on verification, which had been submitted by six State parties (PTBT/CONF/6). The document was the

(Ms. Mason, Canada)

product of much careful thought and would stimulate consideration of the issues relating to verification.

53. Mr. CHABALA (Zambia) said that, with the end of the cold war, the climate was conducive to negotiations to convert the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

54. The record of nuclear testing since 1945 was one of unfulfilled commitments, deceit and a trust betrayed. The 1963 partial test-ban Treaty had engendered sincere hopes for nuclear disarmament and had embodied a categorical commitment to the achievement of that goal. However, since 1945, the number of nuclear test explosions had grown, as had the number of bombs. There were currently some 50,000 warheads in the world, possessing the explosive yield of roughly 20 billion tons of TNT.

55. It had become increasingly clear that the significance of those bombs transcended war and all its causes and outcomes. In numerous policy statements, Soviet and American leaders had acknowledged the supreme importance of the nuclear peril.

56. However, such high-level acknowledgements of the grave danger facing mankind had not been translated into practical measures on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. The failure to fulfil commitments under the partial test-ban Treaty had undermined the non-proliferation Treaty, which had entered into force in 1970.

57. His delegation shared the widespread view that the responsibility for the bleak record in the field of nuclear disarmament rested with the depository nuclear-weapon States, which had failed to meet the obligations undertaken in existing treaties. Moreover, a comprehensive test ban did indeed constitute the litmus test of a demonstrable commitment to nuclear disarmament and the de-escalation of the nuclear-arms race.

58. The imperative need to address seriously the cessation of all nuclear testing in all environments for all time could not be over-emphasized. No other question in the field of disarmament had been the subject of so much international concern, discussion and study. The ominous consequences for mankind in the event of an accident at a nuclear-weapons facility should be at the forefront of the international community's concerns and should underlie its consideration of the proposed amendment to the partial test-ban Treaty, an amendment which he fully supported.

59. If the international community could not reach agreement on halting underground nuclear tests, it could not expect to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. As long as the nuclear-weapon States continued testing, non-nuclear-weapon States would feel compelled to develop such weapons.

(Mr. Chabala, Zambia)

60. His country, a non-nuclear-weapon State, had not yet acceded to the non-proliferation Treaty. In his region, only racist South Africa - which had not acceded to the Treaty either - had the capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons. In the recent past, South Africa, in response to international pressures to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty and to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, had insisted that it could do so only if the front-line States signed the Treaty first. That position was preposterous, since the front-line States did not have nuclear capability and remained committed to peace, stability and democracy in the region. South Africa should cease to use the front-line States as a pretext for its failure to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty.

61. As a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), his country respected the OAU Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa, which was a step in the right direction.

62. Article II of the partial test-ban Treaty provided for its amendment. Issues relating to verification had been used as a pretext for further delay in the progress towards a comprehensive test ban. Yet it had been established by many countries in possession of the necessary technology that the problem could be solved by the establishment of an international seismic verification system. It was therefore clear that those who objected to the proposed amendments were doing so for political reasons.

63. If real progress could not be achieved at the Amendment Conference, he would support the proposal for its reconvening in 1992. Furthermore, the Amendment Conference should provide a much-needed impetus to the Conference on Disarmament to pursue its work within the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, thus complementing the work of the Amendment Conference.

64. Lastly, he expressed appreciation for the contribution made by non-governmental organizations to the work of the Amendment Conference. Those organizations played a vital role in raising public awareness, especially in the nuclear-weapon States.

65. Mr. CHENAUX-REPOND (Switzerland) said that his Government supported the efforts to achieve a comprehensive and verifiable ban on nuclear testing. The technical reasons which were cited to justify the continuation of testing did not appear to be convincing. The current nuclear arsenals contained a sufficient number of warheads with a high probability of functioning. Testing should not be used to improve existing weapons or to develop new generations of weapons. It was difficult to justify the prohibition on the spread of nuclear weapons if those States which already possessed nuclear arsenals continued to develop them.

66. Although the ecological consequences of underground tests were not as severe as those of tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, underground tests were not free of danger to the environment. For that reason, also, he hoped

(Mr. Chenaux-Repond, Switzerland)

that rapid and effective progress could be made towards the achievement of a comprehensive test ban.

67. His country was participating in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts and was willing to help in the establishment of a world-wide verification system.

68. The search for a multilateral agreement on a comprehensive test ban was meaningful only to the extent that all the parties concerned participated in it. The partial test-ban Treaty was therefore hardly a suitable framework, since it excluded two of the five States which conducted nuclear tests. Furthermore, an agreement on a comprehensive ban would be incomplete and would have little likelihood of being ratified by a majority of States if the question of verification was not settled in a satisfactory manner. However, the technical details of verification must be worked out by experts, which would take some time. Accordingly, the Amendment Conference, which was meeting for a short time, hardly constituted an appropriate forum.

69. On the other hand, the Conference on Disarmament satisfied the requirements. A comprehensive test ban had been on its agenda for a long time and an ad hoc committee on that issue had been re-established in 1990. It was to be hoped that the Ad Hoc Committee could continue its work and be given a negotiating mandate.

70. The work of the Conference on Disarmament should encourage parallel and complementary efforts to achieve new bilateral restrictions on the number and yield of tests. He noted with satisfaction that the United States and the Soviet Union had committed themselves in principle to further efforts in that direction. The fundamental improvement in East-West relations and the progress already made in the field of nuclear disarmament - as shown by the INF Treaty - were grounds for cautious optimism. The Amendment Conference provided a welcome opportunity for an exchange of views among States parties on all the issues relating to a comprehensive test ban. One of the subjects which merited special attention was that of verification, as it would undoubtedly play a key role in any future agreement.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.